Partisan Inequality in Property Tax Assessments: A Fiscal Burden on Political Minorities*

Ankit Kalda **Vikas Soni** **Qianfan Wu**

January 2026

We document a political partisanship-based assessment gap that imposes disproportionate fiscal burdens on political minorities. Using property tax data matched with voter registration records across the United States, we find that political minorities—Republicans in Democratic-majority counties and Democrats in Republican-majority counties—face higher property tax assessments than the political majority within the same tax jurisdiction, despite being subject to identical tax administration and rates. This partisan assessment gap is economically significant, representing 40-50% of the previously documented racial assessment gap. In Republican counties, the gap is driven by within-neighborhood variation, while in Democratic counties, it is driven by variation across neighborhoods, enabled by higher levels of residential partisan segregation. Leveraging novel hand-collected historical data on assessor identities and their political affiliations, we show that assessor bias contributes to these gaps: disparities are weaker when the assessor shares the political affiliation of the minority group and larger otherwise. Moreover, the gap's magnitude varies with the partisan composition of county commissions—increasing with aligned political control and decreasing with minority party representation. These findings demonstrate that property tax assessments, though ostensibly neutral, become tools for redistributing fiscal burdens along partisan lines and generate inequities in homeownership costs.

Keywords: Political partisanship, partisanship, property taxes, tax assessment, assessment gap, homeownership costs

*Ankit Kalda and Qianfan Wu are with Indiana University; Vikas Soni is with the University of South Florida. Emails: akalda@iu.edu; vsoni@usf.edu; qw18@iu.edu.

1 Introduction

Political partisanship has intensified over the years, fostering increased animosity between individuals of opposing political affiliations (Iyengar and Westwood, 2015; Mason, 2015; Gentzkow, 2016; Mason, 2018; Iyengar et al., 2019; Kalmoe and Mason, 2019). This affective polarization extends beyond traditional political arenas, influencing personal decisions such as marriage and hiring, as well as financial behaviors.[1] For instance, individuals are more likely to sell their homes and relocate when new neighbors with opposing political affiliations move in, compared to neighbors with similar affiliations (McCartney et al., 2024). Such dynamics and increasing partisanship can contribute to geographical segregation along partisan lines, potentially amplifying both pecuniary and non-pecuniary costs of being a political minority within a neighborhood.

In this paper, we examine a potential pecuniary cost of partisanship by documenting a political partisanship-based assessment gap in property tax administration. Property taxes are a cornerstone of local government funding and one of the most significant recurring expenses for homeowners. These taxes are calculated as product of assessed values—local officials' estimates of market prices—and locally determined tax rates. Ideally, the U.S. property tax system is intended to be proportional to home value, meaning that equitable administration requires the ratio of assessed value to market value to remain consistent across all residents within a jurisdiction. Yet, we find that this ratio is systematically higher for political minorities, imposing a disproportionate fiscal burden on these groups.

Addressing this question requires access to detailed information about properties, including their tax assessments and market values, and the political affiliation of individuals residing in them. We utilize CoreLogic's comprehensive dataset to obtain property-level information, including assessed values, market values, property tax amounts, tax rates, and

1. For example, Gift and Gift (2015); Huber and Malhotra (2017); Iyengar et al. (2018); McConnell et al. (2018); Colonnelli et al. (2022); Cookson et al. (2020); Engelberg et al. (2022)

key characteristics such as location and transaction history. To incorporate political affiliation, we merge the CoreLogic data with individual-level voter registration records using first name, last name, and street addresses. Since the market values provided by CoreLogic are modeled estimates that may deviate from actual market values, we follow Avenancio-Leon and Howard (2022) and focus on properties that were transacted during our sample period. We confine our analysis to the years when these transactions occurred, using observed transaction prices as accurate measures of market value. Our data encompass 49 states, enabling us to examine the tax burdens of political minorities within a national representative sample.

Our main outcome variable is the ratio of assessed value to market value. To analyze differences, we compare Republicans and Democrats residing within the same tax jurisdiction and year using an ordinary least squares (OLS) framework. Since property taxes can be levied at multiple levels, we ensure robustness by employing various definitions of tax jurisdiction, including county, county-by-city, county-by-municipality, and county-by-tax area code. These definitions ensure that properties being compared are subject to the same local tax administration and rates. Our primary focus is on how the difference in assessed value ratios between Republicans and Democrats varies across Republican- and Democratic-leaning counties, where county partisanship is measured by the fraction of registered Republicans and Democrats residing in each county.

We begin by replicating the racial assessment gap documented in Avenancio-Leon and Howard (2022), which serves two key purposes. First, it helps validate our data and research setting. Second, it allows us to directly compare the magnitude of the partisan assessment gap to the racial assessment gap. Our results indicate that, after controlling for the minority assessment gap, political minorities—Republicans residing in Democratic counties and Democrats residing in Republican counties—face higher assessed value ratios compared to political majority within the same tax jurisdictions. The magnitude of this partisan gap is between 0.6% to 0.9%, which is economically significant and corresponds to roughly 50% of

the racial assessment gap.

Higher assessment ratios for political minorities could potentially be explained by differences in the market values of the houses where these individuals reside, indicating selection into properties rather than an assessment gap. For instance, if political minorities are less wealthy and reside in houses with lower market values or struggle to sell their homes at market price, this could inflate the ratio. To evaluate this possibility, we separately analyze the numerator (assessed value) and denominator (market value). Contrary to the market value explanation, we find that Republicans tend to reside in higher-market-value homes in both Republican and Democratic counties, which rules out market value differences as the primary driver of our results. Instead, we observe that assessed values are higher for Republicans, with the difference being significantly larger in Democratic counties, suggesting that disparities in the numerator are driving the observed assessment gap.

To understand how these assessment disparities emerge, we examine whether the partisan gap arises from within-neighborhood or across-neighborhood variation. In Republican counties, the partisan gap emerges through within-neighborhood variation—Democrats and Republicans living in the same zip codes face differential assessments. In Democratic counties, the pattern reverses: across-neighborhood variation drives the gap, with neighborhoods receiving differential treatment while residents within the same neighborhood face similar assessments.

These geographic patterns align with the residential segregation levels in different county types. Democratic counties exhibit significantly higher partisan residential segregation (5.8 percentage points higher than Republican counties). This segregation enables the partisan gap to emerge at the neighborhood level, where areas in which predominantly specific partisan groups reside face systematically different assessments. Republican counties, with their lower segregation and mixed neighborhoods, lack this geographic concentration. This mechanically limits differential tax burdens along partisan lines at the neighborhood level.

Consistent with this argument, we find the gap to be concentrated among Democratic counties with higher segregation while Republican counties do not exhibit such heterogeneity.

The contrast between across-neighborhood and within-neighborhood variation in Democratic and Republican counties respectively suggests different underlying mechanisms. While across-neighborhood can emerge from processes that operate at a broader geographic level, within-neighborhood differences require processes or behaviors that differ at the individual-level. To understand what drives these patterns, we examine both the institutional structure of property tax administration and the behavior of key decision-makers in the assessment process, county commissioners and tax assessors.

We next evaluate the role of tax assessors who are responsible for determining property valuations for all parcels within their jurisdiction. They have considerable discretion in how they update tax assessment values, including the frequency and direction of adjustments. Potential inconsistencies in these updates could explain our findings if they systematically disadvantage political minorities. We examine this hypothesis through the lens of in-group vs out-of-group bias (e.g., Shayo and Zussman (2011); Fisman et al. (2017)) by evaluating heterogeneity in assessment gaps based on political affiliation of the assessors themselves. We find that assessment gaps are larger when the assessor belongs to the political majority, and statistically indistinguishable from zero when the assessor's affiliation aligns with that of the political minority. Consistent with out-of-group bias, this heterogeneity holds symmetrically in both Democratic and Republican counties.

A natural question is how assessors or commissioners identify the political affiliations of property owners. At the neighborhood level, it may be relatively straightforward to infer whether certain areas predominantly consist of political minorities. However, identifying affiliation at the property level is more challenging. One potential channel is through physical visits, which may allow assessors to observe visible indicators such as yard signs, flags, bumper stickers, or other political displays. Although physical inspections have become

less common with the adoption of automated valuation models, aerial imagery, and mass appraisal systems, considerable heterogeneity remains across states. In the extreme, while some states mandate regular visits by law, others restrict them to high-value properties, appeals, or new construction. We exploit this heterogeneity across states and examine assessment disparities based on physical visit frequency. We find that assessment gaps are larger in states where physical visits are more frequent, with within-neighborhood gaps in Republican counties emerging exclusively in these states.

Beyond physical visits, other mechanisms could generate within-neighborhood variation in assessment outcomes. Assessors may accumulate local knowledge over time through informal networks, community interactions, or prior professional dealings that reveal homeowners' political leanings. In smaller jurisdictions, assessors might directly know many residents and their affiliations. Additionally, property characteristics correlated with political preferences—such as the presence of solar panels, electric vehicle charging stations, or specific landscaping choices—could serve as signals. While these mechanisms explain how assessors might identify political affiliations, understanding the observed disparities also requires examining the constraints and opportunities that shape assessors' willingness to act on this information.

Assessors must weigh the potential costs associated with their valuations. We posit that they are more likely to exhibit bias when the probability of an appeal is low and when, conditional on an appeal, they possess sufficient discretion to defend their assessments. To evaluate this hypothesis, we examine heterogeneity based on neighborhood income and property dispersion. First, resource constraints in low-income neighborhoods likely suppress appeals, reducing the threat of oversight. Consistent with this, we find that partisan assessment gaps in Republican counties—where within-neighborhood variation drives the disparity—are significantly stronger in low-income zip codes.[2] Second, high property dispersion provides

2. Appeal disparities themselves can also contribute to our findings if political minorities are less likely

assessors with greater flexibility to justify differential valuations, further entrenching bias. Supporting this argument, we observe markedly elevated partisan assessment gaps in neighborhoods with less homogeneous housing stock.

Elected officials have incentives to cater to their voter base by providing higher benefits and imposing lower costs (Ansolabehere and Snyder Jr, 2006; Joanis, 2011; Gay, 2017). Residential property taxes, a primary source of local government funding, represent one channel through which these incentives may manifest. In the context of property taxation, county commissions—consisting of elected commissioners responsible for overseeing county operations and administration including setting tax rates and overseeing budget allocation—may influence assessment practices in ways that favor their political supporters. However, their ability to do so depends critically on residential segregation patterns. In Democratic counties, where partisan groups are more likely to reside in distinct neighborhoods, commissioners can target areas known to house political minorities. We find that the partisan assessment gap is significantly larger in counties with a greater number of Democratic commissioners, and it declines as Republican representation increases. In Republican counties, by contrast, this heterogeneity based on commission partisanship is weaker.

Further, when we examine districts within counties where we can identify the commissioner in charge, the entire gap in Democratic counties comes from districts overseen by Democratic commissioners. However, no such heterogeneity exists in Republican counties. The commissioner analysis overall is consistent with lower segregation in these counties, which makes it difficult to systematically increase tax burden on political minorities without also affecting majorities living in the same neighborhood.

A potential concern is that omitted variables correlated with political affiliation could explain our findings. However, for an omitted variable to account for our results, it is not sufficient that the variable merely correlates with political affiliation. Rather, the variable

to appeal than their majority counterparts.

must exhibit a specific pattern: its correlation with political affiliation would need to reverse direction across county types—positively correlated in counties where one party holds the majority and negatively correlated where the other party dominates. For example, wealth or house prices may drive our results. However, for this to explain our findings to explain our symmetric findings, Republicans would need to be wealthier than Democrats in Republican counties while simultaneously being poorer than Democrats in Democratic counties. Given that we find Republicans tend to reside in higher-market-value homes in both Republican and Democratic counties, this is less likely to explain our findings.

Notwithstanding this argument, we further rule out this channel by explicitly controlling for ZIP code-level income, education levels, and elderly population (the latter two being closely related to income and wealth). Our results remain both qualitatively and quantitatively similar to the baseline. Along with different measures of tax jurisdictions, our findings remain robust across alternative definitions of Republican and Democratic counties. In addition, we conduct a number of tests to ensure robustness of our findings and rule out alternative mechanisms.

A substantial literature documents regressive patterns in property tax assessments, where lower-valued properties are systematically assessed at higher ratios relative to their market value than higher-valued properties. Beginning with Paglin and Fogarty (1972) and continuing through recent national studies by Berry (2021) and Amornsiripanitch (2020), research consistently finds evidence of this regressivity across jurisdictions. These assessment patterns correlate with and contribute to disparities along racial lines: Kahrl (2016) traces discriminatory assessments back to the Reconstruction era, while Atuahene and Berry (2019) establish a causal link between inflated assessments and tax foreclosures in modern data. Avenancio-Leon and Howard (2022) provide comprehensive national evidence of racial assessment gaps using individual-level property-owner matches, finding that Black and Hispanic homeowners face higher assessment ratios than white homeowners. Additional research documents that

assessors systematically under-assess their own properties (Chen and Cohen, 2024), that reassessment frequency affects equity (Hou et al., 2025), and that appeal processes exhibit racial disparities in participation, success rates, and outcomes (Weber and McMillen, 2010; Doerner and Ihlanfeldt, 2014; Ross, 2017; McMillen, 2013).

We extend this literature in several dimensions. First, we document that political partisanship systematically shapes property tax burdens: political minorities face higher assessments than the political majority within the same jurisdiction, with this pattern holding symmetrically in both Democratic and Republican counties. Second, we decompose the geographic channels through which gaps emerge, finding that they operate through fundamentally different mechanisms depending on local partisan composition and residential segregation. Third, leveraging novel hand-collected data on historical assessor identities and political affiliations, we show that assessor bias contributes to these disparities. Fourth, we examine the role of county commissioners who contribute more to assessment gaps in Democratic counties than in Republican counties, where assessors play a key role in generating within-neighborhood disparities.

Our work also relates to research documenting political and in-group bias in public administration. Studies show that local officials allocate resources along partisan lines in housing (Gay, 2017), infrastructure (Joanis, 2011), and public spending (Ansolabehere and Snyder Jr, 2006), while Spenkuch et al. (2023) and Colonnelli et al. (2022) document how political identity affects performance and hiring in public organizations. More broadly, Shayo and Zussman (2011) and Fisman et al. (2017) demonstrate in-group favoritism in judicial decisions and lending. We contribute to this literature by documenting systematic partisan bias in property tax assessment—a domain where local officials exercise considerable discretion—and identifying how institutional structures and residential segregation enable officials to act on such biases.

2 Data & Sample Construction

2.1 Data

Our analysis leverages the intersection of two datasets: CoreLogic's tax assessment data and voter registration records. CoreLogic provides detailed property-level information, while voter registration data allows us to observe the political affiliations of homeowners. Access to both types of information is essential to address our research question.

CoreLogic's tax assessment data is a comprehensive dataset that includes detailed property-level information such as assessed values, market values, property tax amounts, and tax rates, alongside key characteristics of each property, including size, location, and transaction history. Collected from over 99.7% of U.S. County Tax Assessor, Collector, and Treasurer offices, the dataset covers properties nationwide and spans the period from 2000 to 2021. Crucially for our analysis, the data also include multiple identifiers for tax jurisdictions, such as county, municipality, city, and tax area code, which we use to construct various measures of tax jurisdictions. The CoreLogic data spans from early 2000 to 2021.

We use data on registered voters obtained from L2, a leading nonpartisan data vendor widely used in both political campaigns and academic research (e.g., Bernstein et al. (2022); Engelberg et al. (2022); Fos et al. (2022); Spenkuch et al. (2023); Engelberg et al. (2025)). L2 provides monthly to quarterly snapshots of individuals' political affiliations primarily from self-reported voter registration records and supplements this information with additional sources, including participation in party primaries, demographic characteristics, the census records, and exit poll data.[3] Beyond political affiliation, the L2 database provides detailed information on individuals' race and ethnicity, as well as their registered residential addresses at the time of voting. The availability of registered addresses in the L2 data allows us to

3. Our main results are robust to the exclusion of the seven states (AL, HI, MN, MO, MT, ND, and VT) where L2 modelled individuals' party affiliations without actual voter registration files. According to L2, the modelling accuracy is 85% or better.

link voter records to property-level information from CoreLogic, thereby aligning individual political and demographic characteristics with precise housing and tax assessment data. The inclusion of race and ethnicity variables in L2 further enables us to validate the relationship between race and property tax assessments. The L2 data we obtained spans 2014–2025 and covers all 50 U.S. states, excluding Washington, D.C.

2.2 Sample

The main sample spans from 2014, the first year covered by the L2 voter data, through 2021, the final year available in the CoreLogic dataset.

We begin with property assessment data from CoreLogic, focusing on residential single-family homes. A limitation of this data is that the market values provided by CoreLogic are modeled estimates, which may deviate from actual market values, potentially introducing errors in the calculation of assessment ratios. To address this issue, we focus on properties that were transacted during our sample period, using observed transaction prices as proxies for true market values. To this end, we merge the property assessment data with transaction records using a property identification ID provided by CoreLogic, and restrict the analysis to years in which the transaction occurred. For properties sold multiple times during the sample period, we include each transaction in the corresponding year.

The transaction records include information on both buyers and sellers. To avoid the effect of the transaction itself on assessment values, we focus on the seller and the assessment value for the year the property was sold. Since property assessments involve complex processes that typically take several months, the year of transaction provides the most reliable timing for matching assessment values to market values when the seller still owns the house (Avenancio-Leon and Howard, 2022). We link seller information to voter registration records from L2 using first name, last name, state, and street name of the residential address. For each property sale, we use the most recent L2 voter snapshot prior to the transaction

to approximate the seller's political affiliation at the time of assessment. We also limit the merge to Republicans and Democrats because they have clear directional sentiment (Engelberg et al., 2022). We then remove duplicate matches, which represent fewer than 2% of matched home sellers. From the resulting matched dataset, we compute assessment ratios for all identified individuals.

We apply three filters, following the literature, to remove potential data errors. First, we exclude observations with assessment-to-sale ratios greater than 3 or less than 0.01, as these are likely erroneous values (Avenancio-Leon and Howard, 2022). Second, we remove properties sold for less than $50,000 or more than $10,000,000, as such transactions may reflect recording errors or non-arm's-length sales (Bernstein et al., 2019). Third, we remove all California properties from the final data set following (Avenancio-Leon and Howard, 2022). Our main results and mechanisms are less relevant in California because the property tax assessment is stringently limited by Proposition 13. After applying these filters, our final sample consists of 7,111,093 properties across all 1,935 counties, owned by 7,052,560 individuals, of whom 59.4% are Republicans and 40.6% are Democrats. Our final panel consists of 7,565,488 observations, with each observation representing a property $\times$ seller $\times$ year $\times$ party combination.

3 Empirical Setting

3.1 Property Taxes

In the United States, local governments rely on annual property taxes as a primary source of revenue for funding public services such as education, infrastructure, and emergency services. These taxes are calculated by applying a local tax rate, often set by a combination of county and municipal authorities, to an assessed value—a valuation assigned to each property specifically for tax purposes. Assessments aim to approximate market value and

are typically carried out at the county level, though the exact practices can vary widely across jurisdictions.

Due to the large number of properties that must be assessed, it is common for jurisdictions to use automated valuation models (AVMs) or mass appraisal systems. These methods rely on statistical models that factor in property characteristics—such as size, age, and construction quality—as well as neighborhood attributes, including average property values and local amenities. Geographic fixed effects are often employed to capture unobservable differences between areas, ensuring that regional factors influencing property values are accounted for.

While the property tax system is designed to be proportional to home value, meaning that the ratio of assessed value to market value should theoretically be consistent within a jurisdiction, this ideal is rarely achieved in practice. Property tax exemptions, such as those for primary residences (homestead exemptions) or senior citizens, introduce systematic variation in effective tax rates. These exemptions reduce taxable value, thereby altering the relationship between assessed value and the amount of tax owed.

Assessment ratios, defined as the ratio of assessed value to market value, provide a critical metric for evaluating the consistency and equity of property tax assessments. By isolating discrepancies in assessment practices, this measure abstracts from the confounding effects of tax exemptions or local variations in tax rates. Analyzing assessment ratios enables us to identify the systematic patterns that may reveal disparities in fiscal burdens across political groups within the same jurisdiction.

3.2 Empirical Specification

Our analysis focuses on comparing properties governed by the same tax authorities, ensuring they are subject to uniform tax policies, assessment procedures, and local government oversight. This restriction is critical, as it allows us to control for differences in tax rates, ex-

emptions, and the allocation of public services, which could otherwise confound our results. By standardizing the comparison, we ensure that any observed disparities are attributable to the assessment process itself rather than differences in taxation policies or services provided.

To accomplish this, we leverage detailed tax jurisdiction data from CoreLogic, which includes information on counties, cities, municipalities, and tax area codes. By using different combinations of these identifiers, we delineate geographic boundaries within which all properties likely face the same tax rules and governance. This approach ensures a consistent basis for identifying inequities in property tax assessments within jurisdictions.

To quantify disparities in property assessments, we estimate the following model:

$$\ln(A_{ijt}) - \ln(M_{ijt}) = \text{ar}_{ijt} = \gamma_{jt} + \beta \text{Republican}_{ijt} + \gamma \text{Minority}_{ijt} + \epsilon_{ijt}, \tag{1}$$

where A_{ijt} denotes the assessed value, and M_{ijt} represents the market value of property i in tax jurisdiction j during year t. The dependent variable, ar_{ijt}, captures the log assessment ratio, which reflects deviations from proportionality in the property tax system. The key explanatory variable, Republican_{ijt}, is a binary indicator equal to one if the homeowner is a Republican. Similarly, Minority_{ijt} is a binary indicator equal to one if the homeowner is Black or Hispanic, based on race information derived from voter registration records. This variable accounts for potential disparities in tax assessment ratios attributable to race. The jurisdiction-year fixed effects, γ_{jt}, ensure that our estimates are based on comparisons among properties within the same jurisdiction and year, holding local tax policies constant.

This approach controls for unobservable factors specific to a given jurisdiction and year, isolating the role of political affiliation in driving disparities in assessment ratios after controlling for the contribution of race. By focusing on log-transformed ratios, we measure proportional differences in assessments, allowing us to detect systematic disparities in the tax burden imposed on property owners with different characteristics.

4 Results

In this section, we examine if there is a political partisanship-based assessment gap in property tax administration. We find that political minorities bear a disproportionate fiscal burden relative to political majorities. Specifically, Republicans (Democrats) face higher property tax burdens when residing in Democratic (Republican) counties compared to residents aligned with the local majority party. The political bias in property assessments manifests across neighborhoods in Democratic counties and within neighborhoods in Republican counties. Further analysis suggests that the degree of political segregation and the partisan affiliation of county commissioners and tax assessors help explain these patterns.

4.1 Baseline estimates

Table 2 presents the baseline estimates examining whether property assessments exhibit partisan bias between Republican and Democratic homeowners, conditional on the political composition of the county.

In the baseline results, we define a tax jurisdiction as the combination of county and city boundaries. We use county-city-year fixed effects to capture the effects of assessment biases arising from assessment values for individuals in the same jurisdiction, facing similar levels of tax rates and public services. To identify areas dominated by one party, we classify counties into Republican and Democratic counties based on the share of Democratic registered voters. Counties in the bottom and top quartiles of the national distribution of Democratic voter share are labeled as Republican and Democratic counties, respectively. We then use the empirical specification in Equation (1) to examine the effects of political bias in property assessments separately for Republican counties, Democratic counties, and counties in the middle two quartiles of the national distribution of Democratic voter share.

The baseline estimates in Table 2 reveal a partisan assessment gap that disproportion-

ately affects political minorities. Column (1) shows that Republican homeowners face a 0.9% lower assessment-to-sale ratio compared to Democratic homeowners in Republican counties, while Column (4) shows that Republican homeowners face a 0.6% higher ratio in Democratic counties. These results suggest that Democratic (Republican) homeowners bear higher property tax burdens when residing in Republican (Democratic) counties. We find small and statistically insignificant political assessment gaps in non-Republican and non-Democratic counties, as shown in Columns (2) and (3), indicating that the partisan assessment gap primarily manifests in areas with strong political dominance.

Consistent with Avenancio-Leon and Howard (2022), we also find that minority homeowners—specifically Black or Hispanic individuals—systematically face higher tax burdens, with assessment-to-sale ratios 0.7% to 1.7% higher than those of non-minority homeowners. The magnitude of the political assessment gap represents 46% to 52% of the racial assessment gap reported in Columns (1) and (4). In Table A3, we further show that these results remain robust under alternative definitions of tax jurisdictions, including those based on combinations of county, city, tax area, and school district boundaries.

We additionally provide state-level evidence on the political assessment gap in Figure 1, which plots the estimated coefficient difference for β in Equation (1) between Democratic and Republican counties. A larger coefficient difference indicates greater magnitude of the assessment gap in either Republican or Democratic counties, or both. We find that the magnitude of the political assessment gap is highest in Kentucky, Oregon, and Minnesota, and lowest in Montana, Alabama, and Virginia.

4.1.1 Numerator vs Denominator

To evaluate whether the observed partisan assessment gap is driven by differences in property sale prices (denominator) or differences in assessed values (numerator), we examine the relationship of political affiliation with the assessed value and property sale amount in

Table 3. This analysis contributes to understanding whether assessors systematically assign higher assessed values to properties owned by political minorities, or if the disparities are simply a reflection of differences in market prices.

Table 3 shows that the partisan assessment gap is primarily driven by discrepancies in assessed values rather than sale prices. Columns (1) and (2) examine the effect of political affiliation on the log of sale prices in Republican and Democratic counties, respectively, while Columns (3) and (4) analyze the relationship between political affiliation and the log of assessed values for the same properties.

Columns (1) and (2) indicate that, on average, Republicans sell their homes at a 10.5% premium in Republican counties and at a 12.4% premium in Democratic counties relative to Democratic sellers. Columns (3) and (4) show that Republicans' properties are assessed 9.6% higher in Republican counties and 13.0% higher in Democratic counties.

These findings suggest that although Republicans tend to sell their houses at higher prices in both Republican and Democratic counties, the increase in assessed values is smaller than the increase in sale prices in Republican counties—implying a lower relative tax burden. In contrast, in Democratic counties, the increase in assessed values for Republicans exceeds the sale price premium relative to Democratic sellers. The coefficient difference between Columns (3) and (4) (13.0% – 9.6% = 3.4%) is larger than that between Columns (1) and (2) (12.4% – 10.5% = 1.9%), suggesting greater divergence in assessed values for Republicans across county types compared to the divergence of sales prices. Overall, these results indicate that the partisan assessment gap—leading to higher tax burdens for political minorities—is primarily driven by differences in assessed values (the numerator) rather than sale prices (the denominator).

4.2 Within- vs Across-neighborhood Variation

To further investigate the sources of the observed partisan assessment gap, we examine whether these disparities arise within neighborhoods or across different neighborhoods. In Table 4, we analyze how homeowners' political affiliation affects property tax assessments using more granular ZIP code–by–year fixed effects. We find that the partisan assessment gap disappears in Democratic counties but remains large and statistically significant in Republican counties. Specifically, Republicans face a 1.0% lower tax burden in Republican counties, even when comparing residents within the same ZIP code.

These results point to heterogeneous patterns in the assessment gap both across and within neighborhoods. In Democratic counties, the findings indicate that assessment disparities are driven primarily by differences across neighborhoods rather than within them, suggesting that assessors may apply different standards depending on the overall political composition of the neighborhood. In contrast, in Republican counties, the magnitude of the coefficient remains similar to the baseline estimates, implying that the assessment gap persists within neighborhoods. This pattern suggests that assessors in Republican counties may apply different assessment standards to individual properties based on homeowners' political affiliation, rather than neighborhood-wide characteristics. We discuss potential mechanisms underlying these heterogeneous patterns in the following sections.

4.3 The Role of Political Segregation

A natural question is why across-neighborhood variation explains assessment gaps in Democratic counties, whereas within-neighborhood variation does so in Republican counties. A plausible explanation lies in differences in residential segregation across county types. If Republican counties are less segregated, the likelihood that within-neighborhood variation contributes to the gaps mechanically decreases. In contrast, greater segregation in

Democratic counties may amplify across-neighborhood differences. For instance, Democratic counties tend to be more urban, often containing spatially clustered Republican neighborhoods, while Republican counties are typically more rural, with Democratic residents more geographically dispersed.

To formally test this, we quantify the degree of political segregation within each county, we compute a political segregation (dissimilarity) index following Avenancio-Leon and Howard (2022). For a given county C, the index is defined as

$$Seg_C = \frac{1}{2} \sum_{c \in C} \left| \frac{R_c}{R_C} - \frac{D_c}{D_C} \right|, \tag{2}$$

where c indexes ZIP codes (or census tracts) within county C. R_c and D_c denote the number of registered Republican and Democratic voters in ZIP Code c, respectively. The terms $R_C = \sum_{c \in C} R_c$ and $D_C = \sum_{c \in C} D_c$ represent the total numbers of Republican and Democratic voters in the county. The index Seg_C takes values between 0 and 1, where a value of 0 indicates perfect integration—Republicans and Democrats are evenly distributed across ZIP codes—while a value of 1 indicates complete segregation, meaning that Republicans and Democrats reside in entirely separate ZIP codes.

We use this segregation measure as the outcome variable in the analysis reported in Panel A of Table 5. The key independent variables are dummy indicators for counties grouped by quartiles of the Democratic share of the population. We find that counties in the highest quartile of Democratic population share exhibit 5.8% higher segregation than those in the lowest quartile. Higher segregation in Democratic counties allows partisan assessment gaps to emerge at the neighborhood level, as areas dominated by specific partisan groups face systematically different property assessments. In contrast, Republican counties—with lower segregation and more mixed neighborhoods—lack such geographic concentration, which me-

chanically limits the emergence of differential tax burdens along partisan lines across neighborhoods.

To further examine the role of segregation, we test for heterogeneity in the assessment gap across counties with different levels of segregation. The results are presented in Panel B of Table 5. Consistent with segregation being a key mechanism underlying the contrasting patterns between Democratic and Republican counties, we find that the gap is concentrated among Democratic counties with higher segregation. In contrast, Republican counties show no such heterogeneity, reinforcing the interpretation that spatial segregation facilitates partisan disparities primarily in Democratic contexts.

4.4 The Role of County Commissioners & Tax Assessors

These geographic patterns point to fundamentally different mechanisms operating in Democratic versus Republican counties. Disparities concentrated across neighborhoods suggest systematic processes affecting entire areas, while disparities within neighborhoods indicate differential treatment of individual properties on the same street. Understanding these patterns requires examining how property tax administration functions in practice and identifying which actors have the capacity to generate each type of disparity. We focus on two key decision-makers: county commissioners, who oversee assessment practices and budgets, and tax assessors, who determine individual property valuations.

To examine them as potential drivers of the political assessment gap, we compile data on their political affiliations from multiple sources. Information on county commissioners is drawn from de Benedictis-Kessner et al. (2023), a comprehensive database of local government election results. This dataset provides detailed information on party affiliations and election outcomes for county commissioners across a wide range of counties during our sample period.[4] The election database and the L2 voter files contain information on the com-

4. Although the county-commissioner election data from de Benedictis-Kessner et al. (2023) are nationally

missioner district represented by each commissioner and the district in which each property is located, allowing us to link home sellers to their respective commissioners.

For county tax assessors, we hand-collect names and political affiliations from a range of public sources and supplement this information by matching assessors' full names to the L2 voter files.[5] This combined approach yields a comprehensive dataset on the political affiliations of county commissioners and tax assessors across the United States.

4.4.1 County Commissioners

Elected officials, as key decision-makers in local governance, have strong incentives to cater to their political base by distributing benefits more favorably or minimizing fiscal burdens for their core supporters (Ansolabehere and Snyder Jr, 2006; Joanis, 2011; Gay, 2017). Residential property taxes, a vital source of local government funding, provide a prominent channel through which these incentives can manifest. Although local tax rates remain uniform within a jurisdiction, the determination of assessed property values involves a significant degree of discretion and institutional oversight. This discretion may allow elected officials to indirectly influence tax administration in ways that align with political considerations, particularly by shaping property assessment practices or the conduct of tax assessors. Consequently, neighborhoods with political minorities could face systematic disadvantages, such as slower downward adjustments in assessed values or faster upward revisions during periods of rising home prices.

To empirically investigate the role of elected officials, we leverage variation in the political composition of county commissions—governing bodies tasked with local administration and oversight. These commissions, typically composed of elected representatives, hold consider-

representative, they lack complete election results for some county–year observations, preventing us from fully characterizing the partisan composition of all county commissions. Table A5 shows that our baseline results remain robust when restricting the analysis to the county–years with complete commissioner election data.

5. We obtained information directly from state and county assessor offices and hand-collected data from local government websites, state election board websites, official documents and reports, and news articles.

able influence over the implementation of fiscal policies and the appointment or supervision of key administrative roles, such as tax assessors. By analyzing heterogeneity in the partisan assessment gap across counties with varying levels of Republican and Democratic representation, we evaluate the extent to which political incentives contribute to disparities in property tax assessments. Specifically, we test whether the partisan assessment gap is larger in counties where the composition of commissioners is predominantly aligned with the majority party, suggesting a potential mechanism through which political partisanship interacts with local tax policies.

We report these results in Table 6. In panel A, our findings indicate that within Democratic counties, where partisan groups are more likely to reside in distinct neighborhoods, the partisan assessment gap is significantly larger in areas with a higher share of Democratic commissioners. Conversely, the gap narrows as Republican representation on the commission increases, suggesting that greater political balance in local governance may act as a mitigating force against partisan disparities. In Republican counties, by contrast, this heterogeneity based on commission partisanship is weaker.

Further, when we examine districts within counties where we can identify the commissioner in charge in Panel B, the entire gap in Democratic counties comes from districts overseen by Democratic commissioners. However, no such heterogeneity exists in Republican counties. The commissioner analysis overall is consistent with lower segregation in these counties, which makes it difficult to systematically increase tax burden on political minorities without also affecting majorities living in the same neighborhood.

4.4.2 Assessor Bias

Tax assessors have considerable discretion in determining how and when property assessment values are updated. This discretion includes decisions regarding the frequency of updates, the methods used to estimate property values, and the magnitude of adjustments

made in response to market changes. While such flexibility allows assessors to account for unique property characteristics and evolving local market conditions, it also creates the potential for systematic biases. For instance, if assessors are biased against political minorities, they may update assessed values more frequently or apply disproportionately higher adjustments to properties owned by these groups.

To examine this possibility, we test for heterogeneity in our findings based on the political affiliation of tax assessors. If assessors systematically disadvantage political minorities, we would expect partisan differences in assessment ratios to be more pronounced in jurisdictions where assessors are affiliated with the majority political party. For example, Democratic-leaning assessors in Democratic counties might adjust assessment values upward more aggressively for Republican homeowners relative to Democratic homeowners. To assess this, we analyze whether partisan disparities in assessment ratios vary systematically with the political affiliation of tax assessors.

Table 7 presents the results of this analysis. We find that assessment gaps are larger when the assessor belongs to the political majority, and statistically indistinguishable from zero when the assessor's affiliation aligns with that of the political minority. Consistent with out-of-group bias, this heterogeneity holds symmetrically in both Democratic and Republican counties. These results suggest that assessors, through their direct influence over individual property valuations, contribute to the assessment gaps we document.

Having established that assessor and commissioner partisanship matters, a remaining puzzle is how these officials learn property owners' political affiliations in the first place. In Democratic counties with higher segregation, officials can likely infer neighborhood-level partisan composition through familiarity with local voting patterns and residential demographics. The identification challenge becomes more complex in Republican counties, where our results show that disparities occur between immediate neighbors rather than across different areas.

One explanation for individual-level identification involves on-site property evaluations. When assessors physically inspect properties, they may notice partisan indicators—campaign signage, political flags, vehicle bumper stickers, or similar displays. Though modern assessment practices increasingly rely on computerized models, satellite photography, and batch valuation techniques, considerable differences exist in how states approach physical inspections. Some jurisdictions require annual in-person evaluations by law, while others deploy them selectively for expensive properties, contested assessments, or newly built structures. Leveraging these state-level differences in inspection practices, we examine whether assessment disparities correlate with visit frequency. The evidence in Table 8 indicates that gaps widen in states with more frequent physical inspections, in both Democratic and Republican counties, though the relationship is particularly strong in Republican jurisdictions. This finding implies that regular site visits provide information assessors can use for discriminatory purposes: either confirming which neighborhoods contain political minorities in Democratic counties, or discovering individual partisan identities in the politically diverse neighborhoods typical of Republican counties.

Physical inspections represent just one avenue through which assessors might learn about individual political affiliations. In many counties, particularly smaller or more stable communities, assessors may develop familiarity with residents over years of service through social connections, civic involvement, or repeated professional interactions that naturally expose homeowners' partisan preferences. Direct personal acquaintance with property owners becomes increasingly likely in jurisdictions with limited population turnover. Property features themselves may also correlate with political identity—solar installations, electric vehicle infrastructure, or particular yard aesthetics could function as unintentional markers of partisan alignment. Finally, the appeals process itself may introduce disparities if political minorities systematically differ in their propensity and ability to challenge assessments or their ability to successfully navigate administrative procedures.

If assessor bias is an important mechanism behind partisan assessment disparities, then the degree of residential housing homogeneity within a neighborhood should influence assessors' discretion in setting assessed property values. This is relevant because assessors operate under the oversight of county authorities and face the discipline imposed by tax assessment appeals. In neighborhoods with less housing homogeneity, assessors may find it easier to justify differential assessments by pointing to greater variation in property characteristics (Patil, 2024). As a result, they may have stronger incentives or greater scope to influence assessments in ways that generate partisan bias.

To test this idea, Table 9 examines heterogeneity in partisan assessment gaps by the degree of within–ZIP-code housing homogeneity, measured using the dispersion of house sale prices. We find that the partisan assessment gap is significantly larger in ZIP codes with higher dispersion in house prices (i.e., lower housing homogeneity). This pattern is consistent with the notion that assessors are more likely to engage in partisan assessment when the local housing stock is sufficiently heterogeneous to plausibly justify differential valuations.

4.5 The Effects of Income and Wealth

In this section, we examine the partisan tax burden faced by political minorities across different income and wealth groups and whether differences in income and wealth mechanically drive the partisan assessment gap.

In Table 10, we examine heterogeneity by ZIP-code median income and property sale prices to explore whether the partisan assessment gap varies across wealth levels. Columns (1)–(2) and (5)–(6) show that, within Republican counties, the higher tax burden faced by Democrats is concentrated in low-income neighborhoods and among properties with lower sale prices. In contrast, Columns (3)–(4) and (7)–(8) indicate no meaningful heterogeneity in Democratic counties.

This pattern is consistent with the mechanism that differential rates of filing and winning

property assessment appeals contribute to the partisan assessment gap. Disadvantaged individuals tend to appeal less frequently and are less likely to succeed when they do, likely due to limited financial resources or weaker ability to navigate the appeals process. The fact that the partisan tax burden is especially large for low-income ZIP codes in Republican counties supports this interpretation: the constraints limiting residents' ability to file or win appeals appear most binding for those with fewer resources, amplifying the assessment gap precisely where taxpayers are least able to correct over-assessments. By contrast, the absence of similar heterogeneity in Democratic counties suggests that appeals are less central to partisan gaps when assessments are conducted through mass appraisal systems. In such settings, political minorities may be less aware of relative over-assessments at the neighborhood level, reducing the role of appeals in driving partisan disparities.

We further examine whether income and wealth disparities mechanically account for the observed partisan assessment gap. Specifically, we test whether the higher assessment-to-sale ratios faced by political minorities simply reflect underlying differences in neighborhood wealth, or whether they indicate partisan bias in property tax assessments. Local governments may apply different assessment practices across income groups or neighborhoods with varying income levels. If Republican homeowners are more likely to have higher incomes or live in wealthier areas, our baseline estimates could be explained mechanically by regressive assessment practices in Republican counties (and progressive practices in Democratic counties) even in the absence of partisan targeting.

To address this, Columns (1) and (2) of Table 11 add controls for neighborhood socioeconomic characteristics—average income, the share of residents age 65 or older, and the share of residents with a bachelor's degree—as proxies for neighborhood wealth. After adjusting for these factors, the partisan assessment gap remains virtually unchanged and statistically significant: roughly 0.9% in Republican counties and 0.4% in Democratic counties. These results indicate that neighborhood wealth differences do not fully explain the partisan gap;

partisan bias in assessment practices appears to be the more likely mechanism.

Consistent with this interpretation, Columns (1)–(2) of Table 10 further show that low-income Republicans face lower tax burdens in Republican counties—opposite of what would be expected under a purely wealth-driven, regressive tax pattern. This further supports the view that the partisan assessment gap cannot be attributed solely to income or wealth disparities.

5 Robustness

5.1 Alternative Definitions of Republican and Democratic Counties

To confirm that the observed partisan assessment gap is not due to a specific definition of political minority, we perform robustness tests using alternative thresholds to classify counties as either Republican or Democratic. In Table A2, we use multiple thresholds based on the national distribution to confirm the robustness of our findings.

Our first alternative measure classifies a county as Republican (Democratic) if its share of Democratic voters falls in the bottom (top) tercile of the national distribution. Using this definition, we observe that Republican homeowners in Democratic counties experience an assessment-to-sale ratio that is 0.4% higher than that of Democratic homeowners, while Democratic homeowners in Republican counties face a 0.8% higher assessment ratio than Republicans in the same jurisdictions.

In our second alternative measure, we refine the definition further. We categorize counties as Republican (Democratic) if their share of Democratic voters falls in the bottom (top) quintile of the national distribution. Here, the gap becomes even more substantial. In Republican counties, Democratic homeowners experience a 1.0% higher assessment ratio

compared to Republicans. Similarly, we find a larger assessment gap in Democratic counties, where Republican homeowners face a higher assessment ratio of 0.7% than the Democrats.

We further test the robustness of our results under more stringent criteria. Our third alternative measure defines counties as Republican (Democratic) if their share of Democratic voters falls in the bottom (top) decile of the national distribution. Under this definition, the assessment gap for Republicans in Democratic counties and Democrats in Republican counties remains economically significant.

Across all three alternative definitions, the results consistently show that Republican homeowners in Democratic counties and Democratic homeowners in Republican counties face higher assessments relative to market values. The robustness of these results suggests that the disparities are not simply a result of how counties are categorized but reflect bias in property assessments.

5.2 Baseline Estimates with Alternative Fixed Effects

To test the robustness of our results, in Table A3, we use the intersection of different areas as fixed-effects. In columns (1)–(8), we use increasingly granular combinations of county, tax-area, city, school districts, and year fixed effects, beginning with county-by-year and extending to county-by-city-by-school-district-by-year fixed effects. The results remain consistent across these more granular fixed effects. Across all specifications, minority homeowners—Republicans in Democratic counties and Democrats in Republican counties—continue to face higher assessment-to-sale ratios relative to political majorities. The results suggest that the observed partisan assessment gaps are not driven by unobserved jurisdictional differences or heterogeneity in local taxing authorities.

5.3 Baseline Results Excluding States with L2-Modeled Party Affiliations

For the states of Alabama, Hawaii, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, North Dakota, and Vermont, the administration does not provide the party of affiliation for registered voters. In our baseline results, we use the L2 inferred party of affiliation of the voters in these states. To confirm that our findings are not driven by these states where party affiliations are modeled rather than obtained from official records, in Table A4, we exclude these states and re-estimate our baseline results. Across quartiles of county-level Democratic vote share, the estimated assessment-to-sale ratio gaps are consistent with the baseline findings. Minority homeowners—Republicans in Democratic counties and Democrats in Republican counties—continue to exhibit higher assessed values relative to majority-party homeowners. This finding confirms that results are not driven by potential measurement error in party identification within these L2-modeled states.

6 Conclusion

Political partisanship has increasingly permeated social and economic life, fostering animosity between individuals of opposing affiliations and influencing behaviors such as housing choices and financial decisions. This affective polarization has contributed to geographical segregation along partisan lines, potentially exacerbating social and economic disparities. In this paper, we investigate whether such dynamics extend to property tax administration by examining whether political minorities—Republicans in Democratic-majority counties and Democrats in Republican-majority counties—face disproportionately higher tax burdens. Our findings indicate that political minorities bear higher property tax burdens than majority even when residing within the same tax jurisdictions. This gap is both statistically significant and economically meaningful, amounting to 40–50% of the racial assessment gap.

Our analysis shows that these disparities operate through distinct institutional and geographic channels depending on local political composition. In Republican counties, assessment gaps emerge through within-neighborhood variation, where political minorities face higher assessments than their immediate neighbors. In Democratic counties, gaps manifest primarily across neighborhoods, enabled by significantly higher partisan residential segregation in these counties relative to Republican counties. Importantly, within Democratic counties, the entire gap concentrates in jurisdictions with higher levels of segregation, while no such heterogeneity exists in Republican counties.

Two institutional actors—commissioners and assessors—contribute to these findings. In Democratic counties, the entire gap comes from districts overseen by Democratic commissioners, while no such heterogeneity exists in Republican counties. Assessor bias, on the other hand, contributes to the assessment gaps in both Democratic and Republican counties. Assessment gaps are larger when the assessor belongs to the political majority, and statistically indistinguishable from zero when the assessor's affiliation aligns with that of the political minority.

These findings carry important implications for local governance and tax equity. Property taxation represents one of the largest sources of local government revenue and directly affects household wealth accumulation, yet our results suggest that political affiliation systematically influences who bears this burden. The magnitude of these disparities—representing billions of dollars in aggregate wealth transfers annually—underscores how political polarization can translate into concrete economic costs for minorities in local political landscapes. As partisan residential segregation continues to intensify, understanding and addressing these disparities becomes increasingly critical for ensuring equitable tax administration and maintaining trust in local government institutions.

References

Amornsiripanitch, N. (2020). Why are residential property tax rates regressive? *Available at SSRN 3729072*.

Ansolabehere, S. and J. M. Snyder Jr (2006). Party control of state government and the distribution of public expenditures. *The Scandinavian Journal of Economics 108*(4), 547–569.

Atuahene, B. and C. Berry (2019). Predatory cities. *California Law Review 108*, 107–182.

Avenancio-Leon, C. F. and T. Howard (2022). The assessment gap: Racial inequalities in property taxation. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 1383–1434.

Bernstein, A., S. B. Billings, M. T. Gustafson, and R. Lewis (2022). Partisan residential sorting on climate change risk. *Journal of Financial Economics 146*(3), 989–1015.

Bernstein, A., M. T. Gustafson, and R. Lewis (2019). Disaster on the horizon: The price effect of sea level rise. *Journal of financial economics 134*(2), 253–272.

Berry, C. R. (2021). Reassessing the property tax. *Available at SSRN 3800536*.

Chen, H. and L. Cohen (2024). Assessing assessors. *NBER Working Papers 33238*.

Colonnelli, E., V. P. Neto, and E. Teso (2022). Politics at work. Technical report, National Bureau of Economic Research.

Cookson, J. A., J. E. Engelberg, and W. Mullins (2020). Does partisanship shape investor beliefs? evidence from the covid-19 pandemic. *The Review of Asset Pricing Studies 10*(4), 863–893.

de Benedictis-Kessner, J., D. D. I. Lee, Y. R. Velez, and C. Warshaw (2023). American local government elections database. *Scientific Data 10*(1), 912.

Doerner, W. M. and K. R. Ihlanfeldt (2014). An empirical analysis of the property tax appeals process. *Journal of Property Tax Assessment & Administration 11*(4), 5–34.

Engelberg, J., J. Guzman, R. Lu, and W. Mullins (2022). Partisan entrepreneurship. Technical report, National Bureau of Economic Research.

Engelberg, J., R. Lu, W. Mullins, and R. Townsend (2025). Political sentiment and innovation: Evidence from patenters. *The Review of Financial Studies*, hhaf029.

Fisman, R., D. Paravisini, and V. Vig (2017). Cultural proximity and loan outcomes. *American Economic Review 107*(2), 457–492.

Fos, V., E. Kempf, and M. Tsoutsoura (2022). The political polarization of corporate america. Technical report, National Bureau of Economic Research.

Gay, C. (2017). A room for one's own? the partisan allocation of affordable housing. *Urban Affairs Review 53*(1), 40–70.

Gentzkow, M. (2016). Toulouse network for information technology.

Gift, K. and T. Gift (2015). Does politics influence hiring? evidence from a randomized experiment. *Political Behavior 37*, 653–675.

Hou, Y., L. Ding, D. J. Schwegman, and A. G. Barca (2025). Assessment frequency and equity of the property tax: Latest evidence from philadelphia. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management 44*(2), 483–507.

Huber, G. A. and N. Malhotra (2017). Political homophily in social relationships: Evidence from online dating behavior. *The Journal of Politics 79*(1), 269–283.

Iyengar, S., T. Konitzer, and K. Tedin (2018). The home as a political fortress: Family agreement in an era of polarization. *The Journal of Politics 80*(4), 1326–1338.

Iyengar, S., Y. Lelkes, M. Levendusky, N. Malhotra, and S. J. Westwood (2019). The origins and consequences of affective polarization in the united states. *Annual review of political science 22*(1), 129–146.

Iyengar, S. and S. J. Westwood (2015). Fear and loathing across party lines: New evidence on group polarization. *American journal of political science 59*(3), 690–707.

Joanis, M. (2011). The road to power: partisan loyalty and the centralized provision of local infrastructure. *Public Choice 146*, 117–143.

Kahrl, A. W. (2016). *The land was ours: How Black beaches became white wealth in the coastal South*. UNC Press Books.

Kalmoe, N. P. and L. Mason (2019). Lethal mass partisanship: Prevalence, correlates, and electoral contingencies. In *National Capital Area Political Science Association American Politics Meeting*, pp. 1–41.

Mason, L. (2015). "i disrespectfully agree": The differential effects of partisan sorting on social and issue polarization. *American journal of political science 59*(1), 128–145.

Mason, L. (2018). *Uncivil agreement: How politics became our identity*. University of Chicago Press.

McCartney, W. B., J. Orellana-Li, and C. Zhang (2024). Political polarization affects households' financial decisions: Evidence from home sales. *The Journal of Finance 79*(2), 795–841.

McConnell, C., Y. Margalit, N. Malhotra, and M. Levendusky (2018). The economic consequences of partisanship in a polarized era. *American Journal of Political Science 62*(1), 5–18.

McMillen, D. P. (2013). Sky-high property tax assessments. *National Tax Journal 66*(4), 769–797.

Paglin, M. and M. Fogarty (1972). Property tax assessment and the frequency of revaluation. *National Tax Journal 25*(2), 281–285.

Patil, S. (2024). Strategic justifications. *Indian Institute of Management Bangalore Working Paper*.

Ross, R. (2017). The impact of property tax appeals on vertical equity in cook county, il. *Univerity of Chicago, Harris School of Public Policy Working Paper*.

Shayo, M. and A. Zussman (2011). Judicial ingroup bias in the shadow of terrorism. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics 126*(3), 1447–1484.

Spenkuch, J. L., E. Teso, and G. Xu (2023). Ideology and performance in public organizations. *Econometrica 91*(4), 1171–1203.

Weber, R. N. and D. P. McMillen (2010). Ask and ye shall receive? predicting the successful appeal of property tax assessments. *Public Finance Review 38*(1), 74–101.

Table 1:
Summary Statistics

This table shows the summary statistics of the sample for the main analysis at the property level. The sample period ranges from 2014 to 2021.

Variable	*N*	Mean	Min	P25	Median	P75	Max	Std. Dev.
Black	7,565,488	0.046	0	0	0	0	1	0.210
Hispanic	7,565,488	0.063	0	0	0	0	1	0.242
Minority	7,565,488	0.109	0	0	0	0	1	0.311
Republican	7,565,488	0.594	0	0	1	1	1	0.491
Democratic	7,565,488	0.406	0	0	0	1	1	0.491
% Democratic (County-level)	7,565,488	0.369	0.021	0.272	0.361	0.458	0.994	0.142
Assessment Value ($)	7,565,488	180,751	500	52,800	132,508	239,440	14,057,176	203,573
Sale Amount ($)	7,565,488	313,918	50,000	165,500	250,000	375,000	10,000,000	283,382
Assessed-to-sale Ratio	7,565,488	0.584	0.034	0.279	0.627	0.859	1.568	0.352
Log Assessed-to-sale Ratio	7,565,488	-0.842	-3.396	-1.277	-0.467	-0.152	0.450	0.923

Table 2:
Main Results

This table presents the baseline results examining the relationship between the assessment ratio and political party affiliation of homeowners. Counties are classified as Republican (Democratic) if their share of Democratic voters falls in the bottom (top) quartile of the national distribution. Robust standard errors, clustered at the county level, are reported in parentheses. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

	Log Assessment-to-sale Ratio			
County % Dem	Quartile 1 Rep County	Quartile 2	Quartile 3	Quartile 4 Dem County
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Minority	0.017***	0.007*	0.017***	0.013**
	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.005)
Republican	-0.009***	-0.0003	-0.0010	0.006**
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)
County × City × Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,054,464	1,572,919	2,320,562	2,617,543
R^2	0.820	0.871	0.853	0.836

Table 3:
Numerator or Denominator

This table presents the results examining the relationship between the assessment value (and sale price) with the political party affiliation of homeowners. Counties are classified as Republican (Democratic) if their share of Democratic voters falls in the bottom (top) quartile of the national distribution. Robust standard errors, clustered at the county level, are reported in parentheses. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

	log(Sale Amount)		log(Assessed Value)	
County % Dem	Rep	Dem	Rep	Dem
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Minority	-0.052***	-0.170***	-0.035***	-0.156***
	(0.006)	(0.014)	(0.006)	(0.016)
Republican	0.105***	0.124***	0.096***	0.130***
	(0.003)	(0.007)	(0.004)	(0.008)
County × City × Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,054,464	2,617,543	1,054,464	2,617,543
R^2	0.394	0.478	0.727	0.733

Table 4:
Across or Within Neighborhood?

This table presents results examining whether the political bias arises across or within neighborhoods by including ZIP Code by year fixed effects. Counties are classified as Republican (Democratic) if their share of Democratic voters falls in the bottom (top) quartile of the national distribution. Robust standard errors, clustered at the county level, are reported in parentheses. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

	Log Assessment-to-sale Ratio	
County % Dem	Rep	Dem
	(1)	(2)
Minority	0.017***	0.018***
	(0.003)	(0.003)
Republican	-0.010***	-0.0002
	(0.001)	(0.002)
Zipcode x Year FE	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,054,464	2,617,543
R^2	0.835	0.856
Baseline	-0.009	0.006

Table 5:
The Effects of Political Segregation

This table presents results examining whether the political bias is driven by political Segregation. County-level political segregation index is measured in Equation (2). Panel A presents the correlations between the county-level share of Democratic voters and the political segregation index. Panel B reports the heterogeneity in the baseline results across counties with below- and above-median values of the political segregation index. Counties are classified as Republican (Democratic) if their share of Democratic voters falls in the bottom (top) quartile of the national distribution. Robust standard errors, clustered at the county level, are reported in parentheses. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

Panel A: Political Segregation Across Counties

	County Segregation Index	
	ZIP-Level	Tract-Level
	(1)	(2)
% Dem Q2	0.026***	0.025***
	(0.001)	(0.001)
% Dem Q3	0.053***	0.053***
	(0.002)	(0.003)
% Dem Q4	0.058***	0.063***
	(0.001)	(0.002)
Year FE	Yes	Yes
Observations	13,241	13,227
R^2	0.072	0.080

Panel B: Heterogeneity based on Political Segregation

	Log Assessment-to-sale Ratio			
County % Dem Segregation Index	Rep Low	Rep High	Dem Low	Dem High
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Minority	0.013***	0.019***	0.020***	0.007
	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.007)
Republican	-0.011***	-0.007***	0.001	0.011**
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.005)
County × City × Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	527,225	527,224	1,308,770	1,308,768
R^2	0.789	0.851	0.816	0.853

Table 6:
The Effects of County Commissioners

This table presents results examining the effects of county commissioners on the political assessment gap. Panel A examines the heterogeneity in the baseline results across counties with above- and below-median shares of Republican (or Democratic) commissioners out of the total number of county commissioners. In Columns (3)-(4) and (7)-(8), the sample is split based on the share of Republican/Democratic commissioners in excess of the share of Republican/Democratic residents in that county, as captured by regression residuals. Panel B reports the heterogeneous effects based on Republican/Democratic commissioner districts. County-commissioner election data is obtained from de Benedictis-Kessner et al. (2023). Counties are classified as Republican (Democratic) if their share of Democratic voters falls in the bottom (top) quartile of the national distribution. Robust standard errors, clustered at the county level, are reported in parentheses. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

Panel A: County-level % of Aligned Commissioners

	Log Assessment-to-sale Ratio							
County % Dem % Commissioners	Rep High Rep	Rep Low Rep	Rep High Rep Residual	Rep Low Rep Residual	Dem High Dem	Dem Low Dem	Dem High Dem Residual	Dem Low Dem Residual
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Minority	0.010**	0.015***	0.016***	0.009**	0.025***	0.009	0.025***	0.010
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Republican	-0.009**	-0.005	-0.008**	-0.006	0.013*	0.004	0.013*	0.004
	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.007)	(0.003)	(0.007)	(0.003)
County × City × Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	131,519	129,082	131,019	129,582	741,249	684,997	727,881	698,365
R^2	0.932	0.867	0.926	0.900	0.814	0.808	0.821	0.799

Panel B: Commissioner Districts

	Log Assessment-to-sale Ratio			
County % Dem Commissioner Districts	Rep Rep	Rep Dem	Dem Rep	Dem Dem
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Minority	0.022***	0.028***	0.013*	0.013*
	(0.004)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.007)
Republican	-0.010***	-0.010	-0.0003	0.017***
	(0.003)	(0.006)	(0.002)	(0.006)
County × City × Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	296,115	30,474	578,648	786,868
R^2	0.893	0.745	0.832	0.657

Table 7:
The Effects of Tax Assessors

This table presents results examining the effects of the political affiliations of county tax assessors on the political assessment gap. Counties are classified as Republican (Democratic) if their share of Democratic voters falls in the bottom (top) quartile of the national distribution. Robust standard errors, clustered at the county level, are reported in parentheses. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

	Log Assessment-to-sale Ratio			
County % Dem	Rep	Rep	Dem	Dem
Assessor	Rep	Dem	Rep	Dem
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Minority	0.015***	-0.014	0.003	0.017**
	(0.003)	(0.013)	(0.009)	(0.006)
Republican	-0.008***	-0.003	0.003	0.008*
	(0.002)	(0.007)	(0.002)	(0.005)
County × City × Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	726,413	36,512	742,862	1,233,302
R^2	0.833	0.813	0.847	0.839

Table 8:
Heterogeneity by Physical Visits

This table presents the results examining the heterogeneous effects of the political assessment gap based on state-level regular physical visits practice on property tax assessments. Counties are classified as Republican (Democratic) if their share of Democratic voters falls in the bottom (top) quartile of the national distribution. Robust standard errors, clustered at the county level, are reported in parentheses. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

	Log Assessment-to-sale Ratio			
County % Dem	Rep	Rep	Dem	Dem
Regular Physical Visits	Yes	No	Yes	No
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Minority	0.019***	0.0007	0.015***	0.0002
	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.009)
Republican	-0.010***	0.002	0.007**	0.003
	(0.002)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.006)
County × City × Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	945,852	108,612	2,044,664	572,879
R^2	0.799	0.898	0.816	0.848

Table 9:
Heterogeneity by House Price Dispersion

This table presents the results examining the heterogeneous effects of the political assessment gap based on the homogeneity of houses at the ZIP code level. Columns (1)–(4) split the sample by whether a ZIP code's dispersion measure—the standard deviation of house prices divided by the mean—falls above or below the year-specific median across all ZIP codes. Columns (5)–(8) split the sample by whether a ZIP code's IQR-to-median ratio—the interquartile range (Q3–Q1) divided by the median price—falls above or below the year-specific median across all ZIP codes. Counties are classified as Republican (Democratic) if their share of Democratic voters falls in the bottom (top) quartile of the national distribution. Robust standard errors, clustered at the county level, are reported in parentheses. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

	Log Assessment-to-sale Ratio							
County % Dem	Rep	Rep	Dem	Dem	Rep	Rep	Dem	Dem
House Price SD/Mean	High	Low	High	Low				
House Price IQR Ratio					High	Low	High	Low
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Minority	0.024***	0.014***	0.021***	0.008**	0.023***	0.016***	0.018***	0.010***
	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Republican	-0.011***	-0.006***	0.005**	0.002	-0.010***	-0.006***	0.005*	0.002
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)
County × City × Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	386,658	213,423	797,232	766,862	381,001	219,080	958,967	755,270
R^2	0.8203	0.931	0.843	0.864	0.822	0.924	0.839	0.856

Table 10:
Heterogeneity by Income and Sales Price

This table presents the results examining the heterogeneous effects of the political assessment gap based on ZIP-code level median income and property-level sale prices. Counties are classified as Republican (Democratic) if their share of Democratic voters falls in the bottom (top) quartile of the national distribution. Robust standard errors, clustered at the county level, are reported in parentheses. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

	Log Assessment-to-sale Ratio							
County % Dem	Rep	Rep	Dem	Dem	Rep	Rep	Dem	Dem
ZIP-Code Income	Low	High	Low	High				
Sale Price					Low	High	Low	High
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Minority	0.014***	0.021***	0.017***	0.014***	0.006*	0.022***	-0.0001	0.006
	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.006)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.006)	(0.005)
Republican	-0.013***	-0.006***	0.005**	0.003	-0.007***	0.001	0.008***	0.010***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
County × City × Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	518,049	532,837	1,269,906	1,343,564	525,521	528,943	1,308,032	1,309,511
R^2	0.774	0.866	0.807	0.868	0.787	0.871	0.802	0.878

Table 11:
Main Results with ZIP Code Demographic Controls

This table presents the baseline results examining the relationship between the assessment ratio and political party affiliation of homeowners, controlling for ZIP Code demographic deciles within county-by-year fixed effects. Data on ZIP-Code level characteristics are obtained from the American Community Survey. Counties are classified as Republican (Democratic) if their share of Democratic voters falls in the bottom (top) quartile of the national distribution. Robust standard errors, clustered at the county level, are reported in parentheses. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

	Log Assessment-to-sale Ratio	
County % Dem	Rep	Dem
	(1)	(2)
Minority	0.016***	0.017***
	(0.003)	(0.004)
Republican	-0.009***	0.004*
	(0.001)	(0.002)
County × City × Year FE	Yes	Yes
ZIP Income Deciles × Year FE	Yes	Yes
ZIP % Elderly Deciles × Year FE	Yes	Yes
ZIP % Bachelor Degree Deciles × Year FE	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,054,464	2,617,543
R^2	0.820	0.836

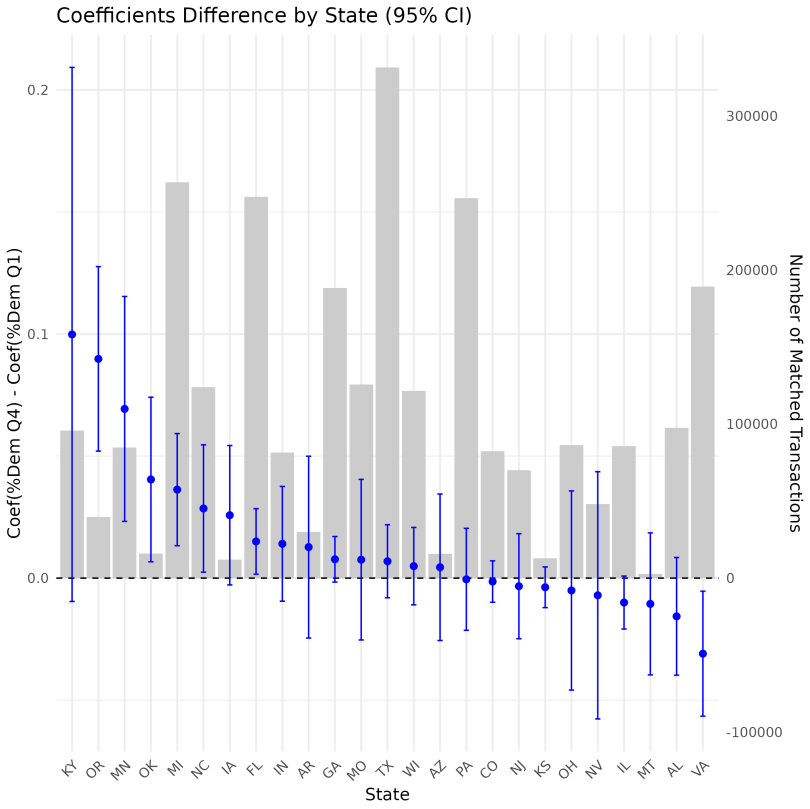


Figure 1: Political Assessment Gap by States

This figure shows the coefficient estimate difference of β in Equation (1) between Democratic counties and Republican counties. The blue lines indicate the 95% confidence internals of the difference. The grey bars indicate the number of housing transactions in each state. The plot is confined to states with at least one Republican and one Democratic counties and with more than 500 total home transactions.

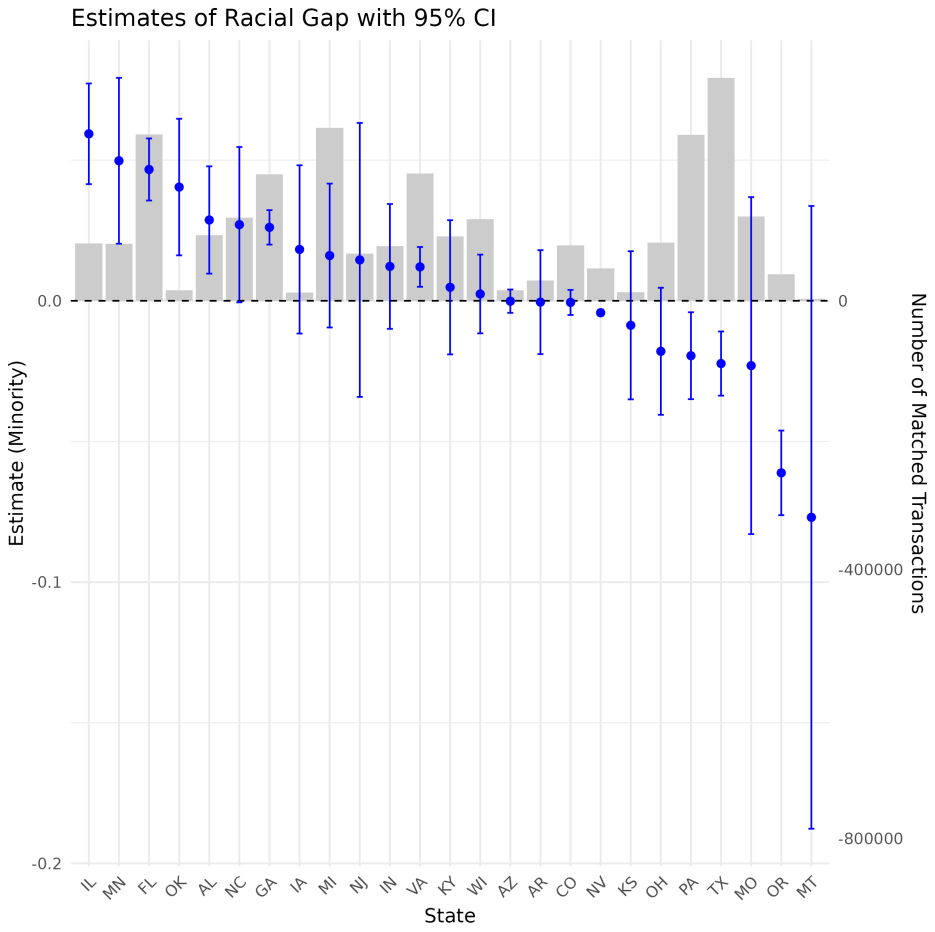


Figure 2: Ratio Assessment Gap by States

This figure shows the coefficient estimates of γ in Equation (1) for each states with more than 500 total home transactions in our sample. The blue lines indicate the 95% confidence internals of the difference. The grey bars indicate the number of housing transactions in each state.

Appendix for Online Publication

Table A1:
Replicating the Racial Gap

This table presents results replicating the racial gap documented by Avenancio-Leon and Howard (2022). Counties are classified as Republican (Democratic) if their share of Democratic voters falls in the bottom (top) quartile of the national distribution. Robust standard errors, clustered at the county level, are reported in parentheses. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

	Log Assessment-to-sale Ratio			
County % Dem	Quartile 1 Rep County	Quartile 2	Quartile 3	Quartile 4 Dem County
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Minority	0.021***	0.007*	0.017***	0.010**
	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.005)
County × City × Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,054,464	1,572,919	2,320,562	2,617,543
R^2	0.820	0.871	0.853	0.836

Table A2:
Alternative County Cut-offs

This table presents the baseline results with alternative cut-offs to define Republican and Democratic counties. Counties are classified as Republican (Democratic) if their share of Democratic voters falls in the bottom (top) tercile, quintile, or decile of the national distribution. Robust standard errors, clustered at the county level, are reported in parentheses. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

	Log Assessment-to-sale Ratio					
County % Dem	Bottom Tercile Rep	Top Tercile Dem	Bottom Quintile Rep	Top Quintile Dem	Bottom Decile Rep	Top Decile Dem
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Minority	0.014***	0.014***	0.018***	0.011*	0.022***	0.002
	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.006)	(0.003)	(0.006)
Republican	-0.008***	0.004**	-0.010***	0.007**	-0.007***	0.007**
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.003)
County × City × Year FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,470,710	3,494,480	805,401	1,983,443	391,993	876,264
R^2	0.827	0.837	0.801	0.838	0.798	0.815

Table A3:
Alternative Fixed Effects

This table presents the baseline results with alternative fixed effects as approximations of tax jurisdictions. Counties are classified as Republican (Democratic) if their share of Democratic voters falls in the bottom (top) quartile of the national distribution. Robust standard errors, clustered at the county level, are reported in parentheses. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

	Log Assessment-to-sale Ratio							
	Rep	Dem	Rep	Dem	Rep	Dem	Rep	Dem
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Minority	0.019***	0.002	0.018***	0.006	0.016***	0.013***	0.015***	0.012**
	(0.003)	(0.007)	(0.002)	(0.007)	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.005)
Republican	-0.009***	0.010**	-0.009***	0.006***	-0.008***	0.004*	-0.006***	0.005**
	(0.002)	(0.004)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
County × Year	Yes	Yes						
County × Tax Area × Year			Yes	Yes				
County × City × Tax Area × Year					Yes	Yes		
County × City × School District × Year							Yes	Yes
Observations	1,054,464	2,617,543	1,054,464	2,617,543	1,054,464	2,617,543	579,314	1,673,706
R^2	0.806	0.808	0.828	0.845	0.847	0.860	0.849	0.870

Table A4:
Main Results Excluding States with L2-Modeled Party Affiliations

This table presents the baseline results excluding the seven states (Al, HI, MN, MO, MT, ND, and VT) where L2 infers individuals' party affiliations rather than using actual voter registration data. Counties are classified as Republican (Democratic) if their share of Democratic voters falls in the bottom (top) quartile of the national distribution. Robust standard errors, clustered at the county level, are reported in parentheses. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

	Log Assessment-to-sale Ratio			
County % Dem	Quartile 1 Rep County	Quartile 2	Quartile 3	Quartile 4 Dem County
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Minority	0.017***	0.006	0.016***	0.012**
	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.005)
Republican	-0.011***	-0.002	-0.001	0.004**
	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)
County × City × Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	920,743	1,472,712	2,248,107	2,390,048
R^2	0.804	0.870	0.851	0.829

Table A5:
Main Results with Complete Commissioner Data

This table presents the baseline results for the sample with complete county commissioners' election data obtained from de Benedictis-Kessner et al. (2023). Counties are classified as Republican (Democratic) if their share of Democratic voters falls in the bottom (top) quartile of the national distribution. Robust standard errors, clustered at the county level, are reported in parentheses. ***, **, and * denote significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

	Log Assessment-to-sale Ratio	
County % Dem	Rep	Dem
	(1)	(2)
Minority	0.013***	0.018***
	(0.003)	(0.006)
Republican	-0.007***	0.009**
	(0.003)	(0.004)
County × City × State × Year	Yes	Yes
Observations	260,601	1,426,246
R^2	0.920	0.813